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The controversy was started by an article published on 27 March, the anniversary of the coup, presenting the accepted official party version, which had never been openly contested. According to this version, the Simovic putsch was not to be taken seriously. His government, it was held, would never have considered a real break with the pro-Axis policy of its predecessor. The Communist Party, representing the masses, was the sole champion of a definite anti-German policy.

Kosanovic first opposed this view in a short letter in which he merely defended his personal conduct. In a second article he stated quite frankly that the Simovic regime (including its head) had opposed collaboration with Hitler. He also stated that the government had the support of the people, even without Communist participation. Failure of the Simovic regime to prepare the country for defense against aggression was caused solely by pressure of time, since the Germans attacked Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941, 10 days after the Simovic coup d'etat.

The name of the Croatian leader Macek now living in exile, also crops up in the controversy. Kosanovic relates that he himself traveled to Zagreb on 30 March 1941 to urge Macek to enter the government. His participation was necessary to emphasize Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian unity. The belief that Macek remained in Yugoslavia after the collapse of the Yugoslav army instead of going into exile with the other members of the government is characterized by Kosanovic as an historical error, and he brands Macek's departure from Yugoslavia together with that of Pavelic, the Fascist dictator of Croatia, as criminal.

These disclosures drew in the Communist editor in chief of Politika, who published an article in support of the Communist version. He brands Macek a traitor, calls him the protector of Pavelic and an accessory to his crimes, and accuses Kosanovic of a desire to whitewash the Croatian agrarian leader. That is the present state of the controversy. Kosanovic apparently intends to prolong the argument.

Sava Kosanovic, before the war a member of the Independent Democrats; he sided with Tito during the period of the government's exile in London. After the war he was appointed Ambassador to Washington. A year ago, when the Yugoslav government replaced him with a prominent Communist, Kosanovic was given an appointment as Minister without Portfolio. He is one of those who play a purely decorative role in Tito's regime. He is not a member of the Communist Party and consequently has no real power or influence. However, Kosanovic's position is completely unique in that he is permitted to attack the official line of the ruling party in a newspaper which has a wide circulation. Moreover, Kosanovic has also had the opportunity to present his views at a round-table discussion arranged by the Belgrade Institute of International Politics.

It is highly improbable that the public airing of this controversy has taken place without the approval of the proper authority, in this instance the Communist Party Agitprop. Chief of the Agitprop is party dialectician Djilas, an openly enthusiastic advocate of individual freedom. Consequently, the Kosanovic affair would seem to indicate the existence of strong ideological disagreement within the Communist leadership, a favorable symptom of gradual release from its dogmatic contortions.

However, the attempt to introduce freedom of opinion within the framework of the Communist Party system shows little promise of success, and Kosanovic may well encounter a fate similar to that which befell the writer Coptic in autumn 1950. Coptic was permitted to publish a series of satires, in which he severely censured the privilege system of the state ruling group, until he was severely rebuked by Marshal Tito.

- 2 -

RESTRICTED**RESTRICTED**

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On the other hand, the Kusanovic affair may represent a conciliatory gesture toward the bourgeois patriots to facilitate their adherence to Tito in these threatening times. The affair would thus demonstrate that in Tito's regime there is room for many, even for those who do not see in Macek only a traitor and a Fascist criminal. Such a policy by the People's Front in the face of the Soviet threat would not, however, indicate that the Yugoslav Communists are relaxing their determination to retain complete and undivided power.

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- 3 -

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